

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6162

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 10651

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS ET

SUBJ: US ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA, ESPECIALLY MILITARY

SUMMARY: IN UNUSUALLY CONCILIATORY EXCHANGE, PMAC CHAIRMAN EXPRESSED TO AMB APPRECIATION FOR US ASSISTANCE, REAFFIRMED THAT OUR LONG-ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIP REMAINS "UNAFFECTED AND UNALTERED", AND MADE MILD AND GENERALIZED REQUEST FOR SPEEDUP IN DELIVERY OF SOME LONG-LEAD-TIME SECURITY ASSISTANCE ITEMS. END SUMMARY

1. AT REQUEST OF PMAC CHAIRMAN TEFERI BANTE, AMB APPEARED FOR INTERVIEW AFTERNOON OF SEPT 3. ALSO PRESENT WERE ACTING FONMIN GETACHEW, ANOTHER MOFA OFFICER, AND MILITARY NOTE-TAKE (TWO VICE-CHAIRMEN, REAL POWERS IN PMAC, NOT PRESENT). DCM ACCOMPANIED AMB.

2. CHAIRMAN LED OFF BY SAYING HE HAD ASKED AMB TO COME IN SO AS TO EXPRESS APPRECIATION FOR US ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN RECENT MONTHS, BOTH ECONOMIC AND MILITARY. HE CITED AID AG SECTOR LOAN (\$15 MILL), DROUGHT RELIEF, DELIVERY OF F-5A'S AND B'S AS WELL AS OTHER ITEMS, AND DEPARTURE OF ETHIOPIAN PILOTS FOR F-5E TRAINING IN US, FOR WHICH HE WANTED AMB TO KNOW EPMG IS VERY APPRECIATIVE. HE REFERRED TO "VERY FRANK" EXCHANGE WITH AMB APRIL 15 (ADDIS 4510)
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IN WHICH AMB HAD SAID HE WOULD LOOK INTO AND DO WHAT HE COULD ABOUT

LONG LIST OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE MATTERS. HE WAS APPRECIATIVE OF EFFORTS MADE, AND OF RESULTS. HE CONCLUDED THESE REMARKS BY SAYING THAT HE WANTED TO REAFFIRM TO AMB THAT OUR "LONG-ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIP REMAINS UNAFFECTED AND UNALTERED," AND THAT IF IN PAST WE HAVE NOT DISCUSSED RELATIONSHIP, IT WAS "BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN VERY BUSY. BUT WE'LL BE THINKING ABOUT IT IN THE FUTURE."

3. CHAIRMAN THEN MADE REQUEST THAT LONG LEAD-TIMES ON M-60 TANKS, APC'S UH1H HELOS, SMALLER PATROL BOATS, AND REPLACEMENT OF "TRUCKS" (NOT SURE WE KNOW HIS FRAME OF REFERENCE--HE MAY HAVE MEANT APC'S) BE SHORTENED IF POSSIBLE. AMB REPLIED THAT USG WOULD LOOK INTO THESE MATTERS ONCE AGAIN, BUT AS CHAIRMAN WOULD KNOW FROM HIS EXPERIENCE IN US, THERE WERE REAL AND VERY DIFFICULT PROBLEMS IN THIS AREA. AMB SAID THAT M-60 TANKS, FOR INSTANCE, HAD BEEN DRAWN DOWN FROM US EUROPEAN UNITS WHOSE NEEDS FOR REPLACEMENTS HAD TO BE SUPPLIED FIRST. ALSO, AMB REMINDED HIM THAT USG HAD MADE UNUSUAL EFFORT IN SUPPLYING EXISTING 22 M-60 TANKS, WHICH USG HAD NOT SUPPLIED TO ANY OTHER LESSER DEVELOPED COUNTRY. OTHER LONG-LEAD ITEMS HAD BEEN STUDIED BEFORE, AND IN MANY CASES EPMG WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO AWAIT NEW PRODUCTION, BUT WE WOULD LOOK AT THEM AGAIN.

4. AMB URGED EPMG QUICKLY DECIDE ON LONG-DELAYED FREIGHT-FORWARDER CONTRACT IN CONNECTION WITH SMOOTH FLOW OF NEEDED SPARE PARTS. THIS SEEMINGLY MINOR ITEM COULD CAUSE SIGNIFICANT DELAYS AND OBSTRUCTIONS IF SUITABLE FREIGHT-FORWARDER (NOT RPT NOT DEFENSE ATTACHE IN WASHDC) IS NOT SELECTED VERY SOON. TEFERI UNFAMILIAR WITH THIS ISSUE BUT SAID HE WOULD LOOK INTO IT.

5. CHAIRMAN ALSO EXPRESSED REGRET OVER KIDNAPPING OF CISCO TWO, AND ASKED THAT HIS CONDOLENCES BE CONVEYED TO FAMILIES OF CISCO MEN KILLED BY MINE OUTSIDE ASMARA. AMB RAISED QUESTIONS ON ERITREA AND ON PEACE CORPS PROGRAM. ALL THESE REPORTED SEPTELS.

6. COMMENT: COMPLIMENTARY AND CORDIAL ATMOSPHERE OF DISCUSSION WAS REFRESHING SURPRISE. SO ALSO WAS PUBLICITY GIVEN TO INTERVIEW ON EPMG RADIO, TV AND PRESS. AID, USIS, AND MAAG ALL HAVE BEEN RECEIVING EXPRESSIONS OF APPRECIATION FOR US SUPPORT, PREVIOUSLY RARELY OFFERED. A CYNIC MIGHT WONDER WHAT THEY ARE SOFTENING US UP FOR, BUT ON BALANCE EMB BELIEVES THAT SOME ELEMENT INEPMG, CONFIDENTIAL

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POSSIBLE AS RESULT OF SHIFT IN POWER BALANCE IN DIR AND/OR FAILURE TO OBTAIN SUBSTANTIAL AID FROM COMMUNISTS, WANTS TO ENSURE THAT USG FEELS IT IS APPRECIATED, AND THAT USG KNOWS OF EPMG INTENTION TO CONTINUE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH US. WHETHER THIS WILL BE TRANSLATED INTO SMOOTHER WORKING RELATIONSHIPS, OR A BETTER IMAGE FOR THE US IN ETHIOPIAN MEDIA, IS DOUBTFUL, BUT IT SEEMS AS STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.
HUMMEL

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